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**State Agricultural Development Board Approves \$101,500 for Madison County
Cattle Genetics Improvement Program**

The Kentucky Agricultural Development Board voted today to approve a \$101,500 grant request submitted by the Madison County Beef Association to establish a local cattle genetics improvement program. The award will reimburse half of the costs incurred by eligible Clark County cattle producers who choose to improve the genetic stock of their herds through the purchase of approved bulls or bull semen. The application was reviewed by the Madison County Agricultural Development Council and forwarded to the state board as a high priority item. Funds come from \$ 894,296 set aside for Madison County in the Agricultural Development Fund established with half of Kentucky's tobacco settlement proceeds.

The Madison County Beef Association will administer the program locally. Eligibility criteria and genetics standards were established by the state Agricultural Development Board in a standard genetics improvement program approved at the Board's February meeting. Governor Patton praised the Board's action to boost the efforts of cattle producers in Madison County to explore alternatives to replace lost tobacco income.

"This action means that Madison County cattle producers will be able to market an improved product to an increasingly discriminating consumer market. Investments in improved cattle genetics will yield returns for years to come. This is an investment in aggressive producers looking for income alternatives, in their agricultural diversification efforts, and in the future of agriculture in one of our state's most progressive agricultural counties," said Governor Paul Patton.

The award was made as one of eleven projects approved by the Board during its meeting today. The Board approved a total of \$4,443,000 in state level projects, and \$403,600 in a variety of county-level programs, including the Madison County Cattle Genetics Improvement Program.

"Kentucky is the largest beef cattle state east of the Mississippi and Madison County ranks fourth in the state in cattle production. The Genetic Improvement Program will help our cattle producers take full advantage of our strength in this industry," Agriculture Commissioner Billy Ray Smith said.

"We can really change agriculture through a genetic program like this and I think this type of program will also improve the quality and production of our cattle industry," said Billy Glenn Turpin of the Madison County Beef Cattle Association.

The Madison County Beef Association will announce implementation of the local program in the near future. Producers will apply directly to the local council to participate in the program. The commitment by the Board comes at just the time that cattle producers are purchasing new bulls for their cattle herds.